

IRIS Regional Food Coalition Meeting Minutes, 3/24/11

Present: Marcy Ostrom, Nancy Warner, Nadine Lehrer, Kristi Roberts, Ally Neher, Joan Qazi, Amanda Ellis, Michel Wiman (minutes)

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Welcome & Introductions - Marcy Ostrom, WSU Small Farms Program Director

1999: Washington Sustainable Food & Farm Network requested to the legislature that WSU put more money into sustainable agriculture. Out of this came Small Farms Program and the Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources to further small farms needs statewide. Westside and Eastside were covered with two positions. Priorities have been soil, pest, and marketing research funds acquisition. We have active County level and agency partners on our Small Farms Team. Update: Curtis Beus is now going to be the Okanogan County Director, he will be a great partner.

WSU Small Farms Programs:

Cultivating Success Farmer Education Program

Washington Family Farm Resources (WFFR) listserve: Educational Resources and events geared toward farmers.

Farm Walks: A regional one this year will be Cloud View Ecofarm, Royal City July 11 2011, the entire schedule will be announced over WFFR listserve.

Community Education

Website <http://smallfarms.wsu.edu> (sign up for WA Family Farm Resources)

Recap of December 16 meeting - Joan Qazi, EAT & WSFFN Farm to School Coordinator

Coalition Meeting Management Discussion

IRIS's grant was meant to further the whole mission of sustainability, not just agriculture.

But a small part asked to assess the direct market sector to develop a regional model.

Joan, Amy Stork, and Carey Hunter were on the advisory group to take a snapshot of where we are in North Central Washington (NCW) in order to:

1. Increase food grown and consumed in NCW
 - a. Complete a Regional Food Assessment for entire foodshed to connect all the groups - a "border collie" to keep every local group together.
 - b. A shared leadership system was decided at the first meeting so everyone would own this program. Moving it around the region would encourage more participation. I.e., shared meeting resources, shared notetaking. IRIS will just be another member of the group.

2. Committees formed: Distribution, Education & outreach, Policy. Meetings last fall ('10) to try and come up with one-page informational flyer for newcomers. **Do we want to come up with shared strategies, or do we want to be a learning group that has speakers to build momentum as we move forward?**

Organizations, farmers: are they all brought together by the Regional Food Coalition? Every county has a food policy council. This could be an effective, shared-ownership network to strengthen the connections.

Concerns: What if we don't have the regional representation?

How do we not lose momentum?

Web portal: but this demands time.

There is no follow-through if no one is in charge.

The same people/issues keep showing up.

How to address these concerns:

Maybe we need more time for this group to strengthen capacity, as we've only had four meetings.

We put \$ in the pot and wanted to leverage funds. There is an opportunity out of the RC&D for economic development, but there is no time to talk about strategy at these meetings. The dynamic of the group is that people want to see results locally. IRIS is one of the only regional entities that want to obtain funds to research strategy. We have accomplished a lot already.

Presentation on Farm Bill: Funding and Programs for Direct Marketing Farmers - Nadine Lehrer, WSU postdoctoral research associate

- History of U.S. farm policy
- Farm bill is best known for corn, soybean, wheat, rice, and cotton subsidies
- Also contains programs and incentives for environmental conservation, beginning farmers, organic conversion, and direct marketing (as well as nutrition programs, animal welfare, and forestry).
- Many interest groups and debates around farm bill's passage every 5-7 years
- Upcoming 2012 farm bill – what will the future hold?

Quick presentation on “Local funds for local farms: Cascadian Conservation District” – Amanda Ellis, Americorps Volunteer

An informal coffee gathering to further discuss the Regional Food Coalition and its shared leadership would be great, Michel will send around a Doodle poll to schedule this.

Michel has asked Amy Hendershot if NRCS would like to host the next meeting.

12:00 Adjourn